

Department of Public Health  
and Human Services

Section:  
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Subject:  
Group Homes

**Supersedes:** FS 201-6 (10/01/03)

**References:** 7 CFR 273.1(f), 273.11(f)

≥ **GENERAL RULE** -- Residents of group homes who are **blind** or **disabled** (FS 0-4) may be eligible to receive food stamp benefits. The group home must be a public or private nonprofit residential setting that serves no more than 16 residents.

#### **GROUP HOME HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION**

Residents of group homes may apply either:

1. On their own behalf; or,

**NOTE:** When a resident applies on their own behalf, the household size can include one or more members.

2. Through the use of an authorized representative designated by the group home or chosen by the resident.

**NOTE:** When a group home authorized representative applies on a resident's behalf, the household size is one.

≥ **Examples:** Some group home providers that are eligible are AWARE Inc., Cooper Group Home, Eastern Montana Industries, Flathead Industries, Glen-Wood, Lake Elmo Group Home, Milk River Inc. (Warren Group Home and Mitchell Group Home), Missoula Developmental Service Corp., Opportunity Resources (8<sup>th</sup> Street Group Home and Dickinson Group Home), Regional Services, Residential Support Services, and Spring Meadow Resources.

#### **GROUP HOME RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The group home staff determines which residents require an authorized representative and which residents can apply on their own behalf. The determination is based on the resident's physical and mental ability to handle his/her own affairs.
2. The group home must act as the authorized representative for residents who cannot apply on their own behalf. As the authorized representative, the group home:

- a. is responsible for reporting changes according to the household's reporting requirements;
  - b. is responsible for any misrepresentation or intentional program violation that it knowingly commits in the resident's eligibility determination;
  - c. assumes liability for loss or misuse of food stamp benefits held on behalf of residents; and,
  - d. assumes liability for all over issuances occurring while serving the household as an authorized representative.
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- 3. Quarterly, the group home must provide Central Office with a list of currently participating residents signed by a group home official.
  - 4. When a resident leaves the group home, the group home must provide the resident with the household's Montana Access Card and the following food stamp allotment:
    - a. the **full monthly allotment** if benefits **have not been spent** on behalf of the household regardless of when during the month the household leaves the facility; or,
    - b. **one-half** of its monthly allotment if **any portion of the benefits have been spent** on behalf of the household, **and** the household leaves the facility **before the 16th** of the month; or,
    - c. **any remaining benefits not spent** on behalf of the household at the time it leaves the facility **after the 16th** of the month; and,
    - d. a 'Change Report' form, (HCS-260), if possible, with instructions to report changes according to its reporting requirements and to return the form to the OPA.

**NOTE:** The group home authorized representative must return its Montana Access Card to the OPA or contact the OPA Case Manager to report he/she is no longer the authorized representative. **When the OPA Case Manager removes the authorized representative from AURP screen for the case, the authorized representative's Montana Access Card is deactivated overnight.**

**OPA STAFF  
RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. If a participant resides in a group home, the OPA Case Manager must contact the group home and determine who is designated as the FS Authorized Representative at the facility. The name of that person, not the facility, must be entered as the authorized representative on AURP. Montana Access Cards are produced for the authorized representative and the household. It is important to enter a case note each time a change is made to authorized representative information. The OPA must verify the group home is either:

- a. authorized by FNS; **OR**,
- b. certified by the appropriate agency or agencies of the state, including that the center is a non-profit organization (DD group homes are certified by DPHHS); **and**,

**NOTE:** Individuals residing in private for profit group homes are not eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program.

- c. in compliance with Food Stamp Program regulations regarding authorized representatives; **and**,
- d. serves no more than 16 residents.

2. Central Office must conduct periodic random on-site visits to participating group homes to assure accuracy of the quarterly list.
3. Central Office must maintain a central file of quarterly lists and on-site visit dates and findings.
4. The OPA must ensure the 'Authorized Representative and Group Home Responsibilities and Liabilities' form, (HCS 536), is signed and included in the household's case file and that a copy is submitted to Central Office.

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**AUTHORIZED  
REPRESENTATIVE  
OPTIONS WITH  
MONTANA ACCESS  
CARD**

If an authorized representative is not listed on AURP, the Montana Access Card Customer Service representative can only speak with the resident regarding the resident's Montana Access Card. Calls received by Customer Service from a group home employee(s) because a resident is not able to call for him/herself are referred to the OPA. It is assumed an authorized representative needs to be established for the resident because an authorized representative is not listed on AURP.

When the authorized representative is established on AURP for the resident, the authorized representative can perform any maintenance (deactivation, replacement, and PIN changes) for the authorized representative's own card. Customer Service cannot issue control numbers to the authorized representative for changing the resident's PIN but may deactivate and replace the resident's card if the authorized representative has reported the card as lost, stolen, or damaged.

The authorized representative should not need to activate and/or select a PIN for the resident's card. The resident's card can remain inactive and unused while the authorized representative's card is used for purchases. If Customer Service receives a request from the authorized representative to activate the resident's card or to select a PIN for the resident, Customer Service refers the caller to the OPA for an explanation of the policy regarding authorized representatives.

## SHELTER EXPENSE

The group home is responsible to provide verification of the household's current shelter expense. The OPA Case Manager manually (off of the TEAMS system) calculates the allowable shelter expense and documents in case notes how it was calculated. The shelter expense is determined as follows:

1. The group home **room** expense that can be separately identified is the allowable shelter expense.

**Example:** Resident's income is \$300 SSI; \$152 SSDI; \$100 earnings. Room charge is \$300 separately identified from meal charge. The shelter expense is \$300; code 'RE' on EXPE.

2. If the group home room and meal expense cannot be separately identified, the amount of the payment which exceeds the maximum food stamp allotment for the number of persons in the household (Thrifty Food Plan -TFP) is the shelter expense. In addition, if the resident has earnings from a sheltered workshop applied to the payment of room, 20 percent (.2) of the portion of earnings applied to room and board is deducted to determine the shelter expense. This shelter calculation is not associated with the income calculation.

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**Example:** Resident's income is \$600 SSDI and \$100 earnings from the sheltered workshop. Room and meal expense is \$650 and is not separately identified. \$50 from earnings are applied to room charges.

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$\$650$  (room/meals) -  $\$10$  (.2 x  $\$50$  of the portion of earnings applied to room/meals expense)= $\$640$

$\$640$  -  $\$152$  (TFP)= $\$488$

$\$488$  is the shelter expense; code 'RB' on EXPE.

3. If a group home resident makes a single payment for the individual's care, expenses for room, meals and medical should be separately identified to the extent possible.

If the expenses cannot be separately identified, the shelter expense is determined by deducting the following from the single payment made to the group home:

- a. Any identifiable medical expenses (this amount allowed as a medical deduction);
- b. Any amount returned to the resident for personal use;
- c. 20% (.2) of the portion of earnings that are applied to the room expenses; and,
- d. The maximum food stamp allotment for the number of persons in the household.

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**Example:** Resident's income is  $\$600$  SSDI and  $\$100$  earnings from a sheltered workshop. The resident makes a single payment of  $\$700$  to the group home for her care, room, meals, and medical expenses. The expenses cannot be separately identified. The resident is allowed  $\$60$  for personal use.

$\$700$  (payment to group home) -  $\$60$  (personal use)= $\$640$

$\$640$  -  $\$8$  (.2 x  $\$40$  =  $\$8$  of the portion of earnings applied to room/meals)= $\$632$

$\$632$  -  $\$152$  (TFP)=  $\$480$  shelter expense; code 'RB' on EXPE.

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**Example:** Resident's income is \$650 SSDI income. Room and meal is separately identified and is \$400 for room and \$250 for meals. Resident is allowed \$60 for personal use.

\$400 is the shelter expense; code 'RE' on EXPE.

**≥UTILITY  
DEDUCTION**

Households residing in a group home are not entitled to the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). However, if telephone charges are separately identifiable from other charges, the resident may claim the expense as a shelter cost. The telephone charge must be over and above the normal room and board charge. The Telephone Standard Allowance (STA) of \$32 is allowed as a shelter expense regardless if the STA is more than the actual telephone charge.

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